

*STATE OF TENNESSEE*

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# Agency Strategic Plans

Executive Branch



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Five-Year Strategic Plans

Phil Bredesen, Governor

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*The following BOPP report is excerpted  
from a larger state report that includes information  
on all Tennessee state government agencies.*

*Only BOPP specific information is listed here.*

# **Tennessee Board of Probation and Parole**

The Board of Probation and Parole contributes to public safety by managing the orderly release and supervision of adult offenders, in such a manner as to promote lawful behavior and minimize risk to the general public. The General Assembly established the Board of Probation and Parole in 1999 by merging the Division of Adult Probation from the Department of Correction with the Board of Paroles. The agency has several functions including conducting hearings, the community supervision of offenders, administration of the Community Corrections Grant Program, and administrative support services.

The Board of Probation and Parole is an independent state board comprised of seven members appointed by the Governor. The board is responsible for determining which offenders will be granted parole and subsequently released from incarceration to community-based supervision. The board members and hearings officers conduct parole hearings at state penal institutions and local jails. Hearings officers are appointed by the Chairman of the Board and make recommendations to the board members. Additionally, the board makes non-binding recommendations to the Governor regarding executive clemency.

The Division of Field Services supervises parolees, as well as offenders placed on probation by the state criminal and circuit courts. Field Services aims to facilitate the reintegration of probationers and parolees into the community, thereby minimizing public safety risk and promoting lawful behavior. Probation and parole officers supervise and monitor offenders to ensure they meet their individual conditions of release and the standards of community supervision. The Division of Field Services is composed of eight districts across the state and has 39 field offices. The district and field offices work closely with other community resources including law enforcement, treatment services, and other non-profit groups to promote overall offender success and public safety.

The board also administers the Community Corrections Grant Program, which diverts felony offenders from incarceration by placing them in locally operated grant programs with intensive supervision, community service work, and victim restitution. Grant dollars fund nineteen local agencies responsible for the intensive supervision of probationers sentenced by the courts. These programs emphasize treatment and vary in program type; some are residential programs, while others provide community supervision.

## **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Tennessee Board of Probation and Parole is to minimize public risk and promote lawful behavior by the prudent, orderly release and community supervision of adult offenders.

## **Goals**

1. Through FY 2012, the Board of Probation and Parole will maintain an employee turnover rate of no more than eight percent.

2. Through FY 2012, the Board of Probation and Parole will improve the offender success rate by decreasing offender revocations by ten percent.
3. By FY 2012, the Board of Probation and Parole will manage caseloads by increasing the successful offenders reclassified to lower risk levels by ten percent (discounting offenders moved off of “intake” supervision level).
4. By FY 2012, the Board of Probation and Parole will reduce the number of grant hearings administratively continued by 15 percent.
5. By FY 2012, the Board of Probation and Parole will gather baseline data from six stakeholder groups regarding their satisfaction with our level of service.

## **Goal 1**

Through FY 2012, the Board of Probation and Parole will maintain an employee turnover rate of no more than eight percent.

### **Strategies for Achieving Goal 1**

1. Improve the staff training program and revise new employee orientation so that all staff know how important they are to the agency and are appropriately trained for success. Additionally, provide all employees with an opportunity to experience probation and parole supervision work and the hearing process first-hand by riding along with field officers and attending parole hearings at institutions.
2. Increase organizational appreciation and public recognition of staff achievements by planning activities for the National Probation and Parole Week, highlighting successes in the agency’s “Good News” publication, rewarding outstanding performance, and encouraging team-building activities.
3. Offer greater opportunities for staff to serve on committees or in advisory roles to increase their input in policy development and decision-making.
4. Continue to thoroughly screen candidates for employment and recruit individuals most likely to be successful in an effort to hire the best caliber staff possible.
5. Analyze staff exit patterns and identify and address reasons people leave the agency.

### **Performance Measure**

1. Percent of turnover for all Board of Probation and Parole employees, including voluntary and involuntary separations and retirements.

FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012
7.0%	8.0%	8.0%	8.0%	8.0%	8.0%

## **Goal 2**

Through FY 2012, the Board of Probation and Parole will improve the offender success rate by decreasing the percentage of probationers and parolees whose parole is revoked by ten percent.

## Strategies for Achieving Goal 2

1. Improve the Administrative Case Review Committee process by establishing a Field Advisory Committee to clearly define the program to ensure statewide consistency, establish appropriate program sanctions, and to improve the training curriculum of panel members.
2. Increase the use of positive reinforcements with offenders.
3. Update the Offender Resource Manual by district, identifying new and existing state and local resources available to offenders.
4. Increase the use of referral resources such as treatment programs, offender employment, and job training and educational programs to encourage offender success.
5. Improve the officer training program by developing and delivering an offender-centered curriculum that encourages offender success and the strategies to reach it.
6. Research national best practices and implement where appropriate.

## Performance Measure

1. Percent of total offender population (both probationers and parolees) whose community supervision status is revoked during the fiscal year (not including offenders in the Community Corrections Program).

FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012
11.4%	11.2%	11.0%	10.7%	10.5%	10.3%

## Goal 3

By 2012, the Board of Probation and Parole will manage caseloads by increasing the successful offenders reclassified to lower risk levels by ten percent (discounting offenders moved off of “intake” supervision level).

## Strategies for Achieving Goal 3

1. Develop a plan of supervision program to clearly inform offenders of supervision expectations and incentives for successful behavior.
2. Insure that all offenders are supervised at the level appropriate for their individual circumstances.
3. Monitor and research the use and over-riding risk and needs assessment instruments by increasing supervisory monitoring, performing Technical Services audits, and tracking over-ride data.
4. Research national best practices and implement where appropriate.

## Performance Measure

1. Percent of total offender population (both probationers and parolees) who are reclassified to a lower risk level after exhibiting successful behavior.

FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012
8.9%	9.1%	9.3%	9.5%	9.6%	9.8%

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## Goal 4

By FY 2012, the Board of Probation and Parole will reduce the number of grant hearings administratively continued by 15 percent.

### Strategies for Achieving Goal 4

1. Improve the content of the official versions of all sentencing reports.
2. Complete offense reports on time.
3. Continue to track the need for psychological evaluations and ensure that they are performed according to schedule.
4. Monitor foreign jurisdiction dockets.

### Performance Measure

1. Percent of all initial parole, parole review, rescission (pre-parole), and custodial hearings that are continued for administrative reasons.

FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012
5.8%	5.6%	5.4%	5.3%	5.2%	5.1%

## Goal 5

By FY 2012, the Board of Probation and Parole will gather baseline data from six stakeholder groups regarding their satisfaction with the level of service received.

### Strategies for Achieving Goal 5

1. Develop unique surveys to elicit feedback on the level of satisfaction from each of the following stakeholder groups: 1) probation and parole officers; 2) offenders under BOPP supervision; 3) offenders' family members; 4) crime victims; 5) offender employers; and 6) judicial staff.
2. Develop and implement a process to periodically survey a sample of each stakeholder group.
3. Create a mechanism to capture survey data that will automatically generate aggregate result data, as well as maintain the integrity of granular raw data.
4. Use survey data to identify agency successes, areas in need of improvement, and to develop action plans for any problem areas.

### Performance Measure

1. Number of stakeholder groups for whom baseline data has been collected.

FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012
2	3	4	5	6	6

## **Additional Agency Information**

### **Statutory and Constitutional Objectives**

Probation, Paroles, and Pardons:

Tennessee Code Annotated (TCA) 40-28 establishes the Tennessee Board of Probation and Parole and defines the agency's responsibilities related to the parole hearing process and the supervision of offenders.

Three divisions work together to meet the agency's statutory requirements regarding hearings: the board, the Hearing Officers Division, and the Division of Board Operations. These divisions function to provide several services, including providing services to victims and family members affected by crime, as well as to other interested parties or the public, which includes notification of hearings, clarification of the hearing process, and referrals to other agencies. These divisions also assure the timely and accurate scheduling of parole hearings and hold parole hearings for eligible adult felons serving sentences in state penal facilities or local jails. Additionally, they assure the timely and accurate processing of decisions resulting from parole hearings and final decisions by board members. The divisions process clemency and pardon requests and make nonbinding recommendations to the Governor on disposition, which includes supervising offenders to whom the Governor has granted relief. Finally, they process appellate reviews to ensure parole hearings are conducted pursuant to all applicable statutes, policies, and procedures.

The Field Services Division is statutorily responsible for the direct supervision of felons granted parole, as well as offenders sentenced to probation by the courts. At the end of fiscal year 2006-07, the Field Services Division supervised 55,904 offenders (on both probation and parole), but actually served 75,323 offenders throughout the year. The duties of probation and parole officers are to supervise and investigate the conduct and progress of probationers and parolees assigned to them for supervision. They also make a report to the board and to the courts on the progress of probationers and parolees, and perform other duties and functions as the board may direct. Violation of any of the conditions of parole is a potential cause for revocation or other sanctions ordered by the board. Probation and parole officers report violations of parole to the board and may make recommendations to what action should be imposed. In addition, any violation of the conditions of probation is a potential cause for revocation or other sanctions ordered by the courts.

In July 2004, the General Assembly enacted the "Tennessee Serious and Violent Sex Offender Monitoring Pilot Project Act" in TCA 40-39-301. This statute authorizes the Board of Probation and Parole's use of satellite-based monitoring of offenders using global positioning systems (GPS). The agency established the pilot project and worked with Middle Tennessee State University, who performed the program evaluation. The study of 493 sex offenders who were tracked by GPS for 13 months revealed no statistically significant differences among sex offenders monitored using GPS and other sex offenders in the number of violations, or in the number of days before the first violations. The report determined that the 13-month study period was simply too short a time for the data to show statistical trends or yield any clear conclusions about the overall impact on recidivism. However, the board recommended, with additional staff and operational dollars, continuing the study, stating that GPS is "a unique supervision tool that has potential in adding officers greatly."

In addition to the offenders under the Board of Probation and Parole's supervision, the agency administers the "Tennessee Community Corrections Act of 1985," which was enacted by TCA 40-36-101. The Community Corrections Program is intended to provide services and programs in local jurisdictions for eligible felony offenders in lieu of incarceration in state penal institutions or local jails. State grant dollars fund 19 local agencies responsible for the intensive supervision of probationers sentenced by the courts.

The Community Corrections Grant Programs vary statewide and are designed to serve the needs of the local communities and the judicial districts. Some types of programs are non-custodial community corrections options, short-term community residential treatment options, and individualized evaluation and treatment services as provided in TCA 40-36-302. Local Advisory Boards approve policies and procedures for the programs. Additionally, state law enumerates minimum standards and rules for the programs. The boards are made up of law enforcement staff, criminal court judges, public defenders, district attorneys, sheriffs, and other interested citizens.

### **Obstacles to Meeting Objectives and Delivering Services and Means of Overcoming Obstacles**

**Obstacle 1** – Steady population increases have and will continue to present the Board of Probation and Parole with obstacles relative to service delivery.

Between fiscal year 1999-2000 and fiscal year 2006-2007, the Division of Field Services has had a 26.6% growth in the total offender population. Specifically, in fiscal year 1999-2000, Field Services supervised a total of 44,176 offenders, which increased to 55,904 offenders in fiscal year 2006-2007.

The Community Corrections Program experienced a 28.6% growth in the total offender population between fiscal year 1999-2000 and fiscal year 2006-2007. In fiscal year 1999-2000, the Community Corrections Program supervised 5,291 offenders; and in fiscal year 2006-2007 is supervised 6,604 offenders.

The Division of Field Services strives to maintain a ratio of one officer for every 70 offenders, which allows for officers to spend adequate time with each offender under their supervision. In fiscal year 2007, BOPP has maintained an average caseload size of one officer for every 91 offenders. Large caseload sizes inhibit individual officer attention, and ultimately offender success. Ideally, officer caseload sizes will become smaller, allowing officers the opportunity to be more proactive with each offender in helping them find and maintain employment, obtain substance abuse and mental health treatment (as needed), and obtain job training and additional education.

To overcome the increasing offender population and daunting caseload sizes, BOPP plans to engage in activities that will encourage successful caseload management. Technological advancements play an important role in managing BOPP caseload sizes. The expansion of wireless capability of probation and parole officers will enable them to spend more time in the field working directly with offenders by performing home and employment visits. BOPP also plans to develop and implement an automated reporting system for low-risk offenders, which will allow officers to focus their efforts on high-risk offenders. Finally, a customized and user-friendly offender case management system will free up valuable officer time.



Additionally, BOPP will monitor offender success, as indicated by the successful reclassification to lower supervision levels. Lower supervision levels require less intensive monitoring. Ideally, officers will be able to spend less time with low-risk offenders, and concentrate their efforts on those offenders who are at higher risk.

**Obstacle 2** – Technological innovation has proven to be both an opportunity and an obstacle in the supervision of probationers and parolees. In July 2004, the General Assembly enacted the “Tennessee Serious and Violent Sex Offender Monitoring Pilot Project Act” (TCA 40-39-301.) This statute authorizes the use of satellite-based monitoring of offenders using global positioning systems.

The implementation of the pilot project has had an impact on the workloads, productivity, and morale of the probation and parole officers assigned to the project. Probation and parole officer’s work schedules became alert-driven when Global Positioning Systems (GPS) were added as a supervision tool. Specifically, officers receive a large number of alerts when issues arise regarding offenders on GPS, at all times of the day. As a result, the agency created a GPS Operations Center (GO Center) that monitors GPS activity 24 hours per day. Some of the alerts are immediately dismissed upon receipt by the GO Center; however, others require officer investigation and action, often in the middle of the night. The officers have worked very hard to absorb an enormous amount of technical information in a very short time period. Existing staff has accomplished this project, as BOPP received no additional positions. BOPP has experienced an officer turnover rate of 27 percent among GPS case-carrying officers and 34 percent turnover among staff assigned to the GO Center. As previously mentioned, project funding did not include dollars for personnel. BOPP diverted existing staff to the GO Center and to caseloads monitoring offenders using GPS technology. Additionally, BOPP has incurred overtime expenses totaling \$344,159 during the pilot project for GPS officers.

**Obstacle 3** – BOPP has some basic infrastructure needs that limit the agency’s ability to become more efficient and effective in the delivery of services.

Since the blending of the Board of Parole with Community Corrections Services [Probation] from the Department of Correction in April 1999, the number of board employees increased from approximately 300 to over 1,000 employees at present, which has greatly increased the workload for the administrative and support service divisions. Specifically, the Legal Division, Human Resources, Fiscal Services, Information Systems, and the Training Division have experienced significant increases in their workloads.

BOPP has many requirements for development of information systems, which are driven by on-going strategic planning efforts and business process redesign initiatives. These requirements include the migration towards a paperless parole hearing process, the development of an automated reporting system for low-risk offenders, the replacement of the existing case management system with a customized and updated offender case management system, along with an effort to make all applications and agency documents Internet accessible. The accomplishment of these objectives will take more development resources than are currently available within the Information Systems Division.

BOPP currently lacks the ability to perform research and data analysis. The establishment of a Research Analyst position would allow the agency to analyze trends and research best practices in other jurisdictions as a problem solving mechanism. Additionally, BOPP could analyze various supervision techniques for example, to understand which are most successful. Such position could

also assist in the agency's effort to not only measure performance, but to use performance data to improve overall operations.

### **Means of Maximizing Federal and Other Non-State Sources of Revenue**

State appropriations are the primary source of funding for the Probation and Parole program. Revenues generated by the Board of Probation and Parole consists of fees collected from probationers and parolees, as mandated by statute. Supervision fees for the Probation and Parole program are collected and used to offset the costs of probationer and parolee supervision. Each year, the board, in conjunction with the Budget Office, determines the most appropriate expenditure of these dollars. Fee dollars are spent on items such as: salaries and benefits for 85 probation and parole officer positions, drug testing/screening and confirmations, replacement computer equipment for field staff, mental health evaluations; and officer safety equipment.

In addition to supervision fees, officers collect fees from offenders that go into the Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund. Over \$2,000,000 goes into this fund annually.

The Community Corrections Grant Program is also funded primarily by state dollars. Eligible offenders are required to pay supervision fees. These dollars are used to offset requisite state funding.

In fiscal year 2004-2005, the Board of Probation and Parole received a \$100,000 per year, four-year Byrne Grant award. This grant is for the purchase of treatment services for BOPP's indigent offenders. BOPP is contracted with several agencies to provide these services: Centerstone, Child and Family of Tennessee, and the Memphis Alcohol and Drug Council. Fiscal year 2007-2008 is the last year funding will be available through this grant and it is not renewable.

### **Means of Avoiding Unnecessary Costs and Expenditures**

The Board of Probation and Parole regularly assesses operations to insure the necessity of costs and expenditures. Through the use of internal inspections and reviews, activity monitoring, technological advancements, and collaborative committees, BOPP strives to meet agency objectives using available resources efficiently.

BOPP's Technical Services Division inspects all BOPP office locations, as well as Community Corrections agencies on an annual basis. The inspections insure compliance with statutes, rules and regulations, policies, and agency goals. The inspections result in reports that are distributed to agency management. Corrective action is required when inspections reveal non-compliance. Additionally, the Policy and Forms Division reviews and updates operational policy and procedures annually to insure continued compliance with applicable laws and standards.

## **Future Challenges and Opportunities**

Tennessee's growing offender population will continue to be a challenge for the Tennessee Board of Probation and Parole and Community Corrections Agencies. As such, BOPP will research ways to improve operations using available resources. Expanded collaboration with other state and local entities, as well as treatment providers, social service resources, and private employers holds promise for encouraging offender success. Technological advancements may additionally offer alternative supervision tools that will enable officers to focus their efforts on higher risk offenders. Staff training also provides BOPP with a significant opportunity to increase overall success by amplifying its highly dedicated and hard-working team.